

AFTER SCHOOL SPECIAL

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Please give a big AVENGERS ACADEMY welcome to guest artists Tim Green II and Jeff Huet, who are doing some amazing work on our Sentinel-focused two-parter. I've wanted to work with Tim since his excellent work on Marvel's cosmic books, and I'm thrilled to have finally gotten the chance to do so. Take a bow, guys! Now on to the letters:

Well, last things first: loved the homage to UNCANNY X-MEN #132 on the last page; made me both shiver with anticipation and chuckle with joyful recognition.

After the slightly lackluster Runaways storyline, this issue was back on point; I particularly enjoy the discussion of conflicting points of view about the detention of the X-kids, and that you never push one side over another. Great character beats for Finesse and X-23 near the end too. Do we see a friendship in their future? Assuming, of course, that either have the emotional base required to actually have friends.

Great Hercules stuff; the nudity, the casual reference to his age, and "No warrior can resist the Olympics" are all gold.

Hazmat's depth of feeling for Mettle is beautifully illustrated by her reaction to his land surfing; lovely way to show rather than tell us something. Hazmat's character has continued to develop over the last couple of years; she has a real arc now.

One final piece of praise; it's easy to demonize right wing Christians (I often do it, I'm afraid), and it's a welcome wake up call to read a letter like that from Eric Anderson, who rightly points out that holding a point of view does not preclude looking at others, whether they convince you or not. Thanks Eric; you've restored a little of my faith.

So then, an entirely positive letter; you've done a good job of integrating the book into the crossover event, without moving too far away from your comic's core concerns. Nice one, Christos.

Tim Dickens
United Kingdom

P.S. You know, I read about 30 books a month, and this is the only one I've ever written to more than once.

That's very flattering, Tim; I'm glad our book stands out from the pack for you! As to some of the questions and points you raised:

There definitely seems to be a friendship blooming, or at least a kinship, between Finesse and X-23. Personally, I think they both know a lot more about what friendship means than they give themselves credit for, but I think they're leery of the consequences...both the potential of getting hurt and hurting someone else. I also agree that the Hazmat/Mettle relationship has come a long way, surprising even me. Stay tuned for some major developments there. And I love writing Hercules. We hairy Greeks

need to stick together! Although our next correspondent was less thrilled with our depiction of Herc...

I have been a big fan of AVENGERS ACADEMY from issue one. I work in a comic shop just across from a major college in NC and I am always happy to recommend this book. You appeal to young readers and classic fans alike with a well-balanced cast of teachers and students who all react in a realistic fashion to their challenges. More than anything I love how this book addresses mistakes on the parts of adults and teenagers while balancing classic characterization, diversity and the learning process.

All this makes the first three pages of issue #29 that much more upsetting. Hercules is a favorite of mine and to see him portrayed as this issue did is just insulting. I understand and agree that Herc is the party animal of the team and does not always make the best calls, but to insist "young strapping lads" wrestle naked with him is in my opinion beyond poor taste.

To characterize Herc in this fashion is degrading to his character and more importantly indulgent of the worst Greek stereotypes. Many new readers unfamiliar with Herc's own series, or his many appearances in THOR, CHAMPIONS, and of course AVENGERS now regard Marvel's sole Greek super hero as the "hairy muscle guy who like to wrestle naked with teenage boys!"

Your book has always benefited from a sense of humor, but I just don't see the funny upside to this. My best friend is Greek American and Hercules is one of his favorite characters. He does not care to read your book anymore.

I realize each and every person connected to your book works hard to put out the best comic you can. I just can't help but think you failed in this issue, horribly so. I would love a response to take to my friend and show him that you cared enough to respond.

Daniel Foust
Raleigh, North Carolina

Wow, Daniel, I am sorry to hear that...especially because I'm Greek-American myself, and my wife is from North Carolina, so I feel like I let down the home team! But I do think you interpreted Herc's behavior in issue #29 differently from the way it was intended.

Hercules has never been portrayed as someone who is a sexual predator, or would harass underage kids, and wasn't meant to be here. Much of the humor surrounding Herc is due to the fact that he can be a bit clueless about how things he says and does might come across, in large part because as an immortal, it's hard for him to keep up with changing trends in behavior.

We see that in a joke later in the issue, when Herc tells the newly arrived X-kids that they are not prisoners and there will be no torture. That might sound

kind of offensive to a bunch of modern kids who consider themselves political prisoners, but to an ancient Athenian warrior captured by a band of Spartans it would probably be reassuring to know you weren't going to be tortured!

As for the opening scene, you may already know this, but the early Olympics, and most athletic contests of the time, were indeed performed by naked, oiled warriors, some of whom were probably teenagers, because that was considered adulthood at the time. In fact the word "gymnasium" comes from the Greek, and literally means "the place where you're naked." (Trust me, I speak Greek!) None of this had any sexual component, it's just the way things were.

The point of the joke in issue #29 is that Herc was oblivious to the fact that things have changed, kind of like the way I get flustered whenever I have to send a text. Anyway, comedians say that any joke you have to explain is a bad one, so if nothing else, I should apologize for that. I hope you and your friend will give us another chance!

One thing I definitely disagree with Jerry Smith. I loved the RUNAWAYS/AVENGERS ACADEMY crossover. My two favorite Marvel titles, together at last! Do see what you can do about getting them a more permanent place on the comics rack--either in this title, their own book, or somewhere else entirely. I've missed them!

Stuart Waugh

Stuart, you and me both. But it's not up to me. If you want more Runaways, let Marvel know...the more paying customers who ask for it, the better the chance of it becoming a reality!

Christos Gage

NEXT!



Phoenix Rising!

Send e-mail to
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